

# CHURCHES

## HISTORY OF THE DUXBURY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The earliest records of the Council show that the three village churches, First Parish, Pilgrim, and St. John's - then a mission church, joined together in 1928 for Memorial Day and Thanksgiving services. Starting in 1942 the Memorial Day services were held only at First Parish, later outdoors so that all churches could participate; but the Thanksgiving service continued to rotate among the enlarged membership. There are also records of a summer evening service held on Captain's Hill at the base of the monument and the use of a bus to take people to church during the gas rationing. This didn't work out too well. The Bacca-laureate Sunday service was held in the churches from 1933-1935, the school took it over until 1952, it was returned to the churches until 1961, then again returned to the schools. In more recent years the churches once again have this service, and the Council has given a cookout for the graduates and their parents. The Catholics began to participate in the service in 1952.

Minutes of meetings were started in 1949. The Council sponsored a Vacation Bible School from 1950-1953. For two years it was led by voluntary help, and two years the Council hired a paid director with volunteer teachers. The first year there were 106 children involved, but after four years, lack of interest by helpers caused the Council to discontinue the project.

One experiment caused the Council to open their homes twice a year to boys sent by the Protestant Guild for the Blind. This happened for a while after a local minister, Mr. Hall, left Duxbury to become the director of the Guild.

The women of the three Village Churches joined in 1952 to have one Christmas Fair. The following year the women of Holy Family and West Duxbury Methodist were asked to join. The former declined, but the Methodists joined in, and that year became full members of the Council. In 1955 the Council received some of the money from the Fair. In 1960 the Fair shrank in size to a Greens Fair but continued to be under the Council until 1961 when the job was taken over by the Garden Club.

Wanting the whole town to join the Christmas spirit, the Council asked the service clubs and individuals to contribute money to buy lights for a Community Christmas Tree. We lighted the two big trees in front of what was then the high school. The community with the high school choir joined together under the direction of Roger Jarvis to sing Christmas carols. This was continued until 1957 at which time the lights were given to the school department.

In 1954 the Church School superintendents and the ministers met to plan a teachers' workshop and also a filmstrip library. These workshops were held every year with some excellent programs and speakers from Duxbury as well as professionals from Boston. The meetings were one of fellowship and learning. A supper preceded each meeting and discussion groups were broken down to departmental levels so teachers could exchange ideas. The workshops continued for twelve years.

Back in 1954 someone suggested the churches pool their office equipment and have one secretary. It was also suggested that the churches purchase oil from one dealer in order to lower the cost. The ByLaws were revised in 1954. Grace cards were placed on the tables of the local restaurants with three graces - one for Catholics, one for Protestants, and one for those of the Jewish faith.

In 1956 letters were sent to Holy Family, Church of the Nazarene and the Christian Science Church asking them to join. Also each treasurer of the member churches was asked to contribute 10¢ per member which averaged out to about \$60 per year. The newly formed Baptist Church was asked to join in 1957 and in 1958, but turned the Council down. A matter of theology was the stumbling block. However, members of the Council felt that theology had never entered into our discussions, that our purpose was one of promoting Christian service in the community; and we recognize the right of each individual church to its own interpretation. Holy Family Church joined as an associate member in June 1963 and became a full member in 1967. The Baptist Church joined in December 1963 and the Christian Science Church also in 1963. The Nazarene Church joined in September 1964. Hobart Spring was most active in writing to and talking with these churches while he was President, although it was under The Rev. David Siegenthaler's leadership that the last three churches joined. The Council members were very pleased to have a full house and looked forward to busy years ahead.

The three Village Churches had a United Canvass starting in 1958 for three years, and in 1958, also, sponsored a showing of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" in hopes of raising a little money.

The Council sponsored a Foreign Affairs Institute for two years - a group meeting weekly to listen to a TV talk and then have living room discussions.

We had a United Youth Fellowship for several years, and the three churches joined together to pay the salary of the young man from Newton-Andover who ran it. In 1964 and again in 1966, at the request of the Home and School Association, the Council ran classes in sex education at the High School (275 children at the first session) with the help of a film, an outside speaker, the local ministers, and doctors. This activity was

handed over to the school department who agreed to think it over carefully. It was felt by the Council that this education could be incorporated into the regular curriculum.

The first ecumenical forum was held in 1960. Cannon James Breedon and Professor Steimer of Harvard Law came to talk to us at open meetings. At our regular meetings we had a member of the NAACP speak, and at another a discussion on Fair Housing. Another year we had Dean Samuel Miller from Harvard Divinity School, and the next year Dean Krister Stendal from the same school, who spoke on ecumenism. Father Charles VonEuv spoke on the Ecumenical Conference in Rome to a very full house.

The first service in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was planned in 1960. Each year we had services, and in 1970 started early morning breakfasts and discussions on subjects like: social action, religious education, women's church groups, youth, worship, finance, and administration. Several committees were formed from these groups, and the results were a united Maundy Thursday service and the recent Wider Parental Responsibility program for concerned people. This last was a successful program with three weekday meetings and an overnight weekend discussion under the leadership of Philip Ward. Also started was an Ecumenical Youth Summer Ministry which resulted in Atlantis Rising.

The Council voted to become incorporated so that we might sponsor housing for the elderly. The process of law is slow, but after two years we did indeed become incorporated and have been approached to sponsor this housing. It is under consideration at this time. (This was first discussed in 1964)

The Council started a scholarship fund in 1965 by raising money through an Easter Cantata complete with sponsors and donations. We sent a girl \$800, which she used for tuition at Barrington College to become a missionary. Later we changed the scholarship to be used for a boy or girl with good potential who would otherwise drop out of school. The first three boys went to Brown University Summer School and the last two, a boy and a girl, have gone to the Hyde School in Bath, Maine. In 1966 the money was raised by a concert featuring the Saint Paul's Choir School boys, and two visits from the Fabulous Magicians, a basketball team that played our local team of students and teachers. The latest fund raising was by sending letters to each individual in each church asking for contributions. \$680 was given, and another \$583 donated in memory of a Council member's daughter. Each church was also assessed \$100. The student's tuition is paid for and the remainder of the \$1,000 is put in a special bank account toward the student's choice of higher education. One graduate has already used his money to go to a special airplane engineering school.

The Council sponsors the "World Day of Prayer" in Duxbury, a day set aside when christian women join together all over the world to pray for peace.

We have had Living Room discussions composed of at least one person from each church and a member of the congregation of Beth Jacob in Plymouth to discuss the following subjects: Nature of God, Nature of Man, the Person of Jesus, Who is my Neighbor, and the Meaning of Life. These were well attended.

Names of newcomers in town are obtained from the Welcome Wagon and called on by the Council Visiting Committee. Then the names are given to the minister of the church of the person's choice.

Bishop Burgess has spoken to the Council at an open meeting on the ministry outside the parish to make us aware of things going on in the city and around the world. Lately we have had visits from different groups within the town to make us aware of what is going on in town and what we as a council can do to help. Some of these groups have been Alateen, Bail Fund, Christian Service for Poverty, Courtroom Watching, as well as the Community Action Council and Housing for the Elderly. The Council wishes to continue to serve the community as best it can.

Respectfully Submitted,

Isabel C. Sibilio  
Secretary

January, 1972